

## **Preface**

Under Senate Bill 426, enacted as Chapter 388 of the 1995 Session laws, the General Assembly amended the North Carolina public records law (G.S. 132) to strengthen the public's ability to access all public records. One part of the amended law requires both state agencies and local governments to index their databases and specifically directs the Division of Archives and History to develop guidelines for compliance with this requirement.

G.S. 132-6.1.(b) reads as follows:

Every public agency shall create an index of computer databases compiled or created by a public agency on the following schedule:

- (1) State agencies by July 1, 1996;
- (2) Municipalities with populations of 10,000 or more, counties with populations of 25,000 or more, as determined by the 1990 U.S. Census, and public hospitals in those counties, by July 1, 1997;
- (3) Municipalities with populations of less than 10,000, counties with populations of less than 25,000, as determined by the 1990 U.S. Census, and public hospitals in those counties, by July 1, 1998.
- (4) Political subdivisions and their agencies that are not otherwise covered by this schedule, after June 30, 1998.

The index shall be a public record and shall include, at minimum, the following information with respect to each database listed therein: a list of the data fields; a description of the format or record layout; information as to the frequency with which the database is updated; a list of any data fields to which public access is restricted; a description of each form in which the database can be copied or reproduced using the agency's computer facilities; and a schedule of fees for the production of copies in each available form. Electronic databases compiled or created prior to the date by which the index must be created in accordance with this subsection may be indexed at the public agency's option. The form, content, language, and guidelines for the index and the databases to be indexed shall be developed by the Division of Archives and History in consultation with officials at other public agencies.

The guidelines set out in this document are designed to assist state agencies and local governments in meeting the mandated requirements.